

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1-34. Canceled.

35. (Currently Amended) A method for obtaining a cryptographic certificate, comprising the steps of:

receiving at a metering device a request for a cryptographic certificate, the metering device including providing a register having funds stored therein;

determining if sufficient funds are present in the register for obtaining the certificate;

if sufficient funds are present in the register, generating, at the metering device, a cryptographic key pair including a private key and a public key;

sending a certificate request to a certificate authority, the certificate request including the public key of the cryptographic key pair;

receiving at the cryptographic certificate from the certificate authority, the cryptographic certificate including the public key of the cryptographic key pair generated by the metering device; and

deducting funds from the register for obtaining the requested certificate; and

in response to funds being deducted from the register, activating the private key of the cryptographic key pair.

36. Canceled.

37. (New) The method of claim 35, wherein the metering device includes a postage meter.